



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 19, 2018

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The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
State of Florida
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL, 32399

Dear Governor Scott,

Last month, I wrote to you to express my concerns regarding reports detailing Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam's mismanagement of the concealed weapons licensing process. I have not yet received a response from your office. Today, I renew my request for details regarding the actions you have taken to ensure that concealed weapons license applicants are appropriately screened for disqualifying information in Florida and any steps you have taken to hold Commissioner Putnam accountable.

This week, you stated, "They have to disclose what happened. When something like that happens, you have to be very transparent and tell people what happened. I think it's important for the commissioner to tell us how he has held people accountable." It's time to stop passing blame around and start taking responsibility as Governor of the State of Florida. Adam Putnam serves as a member of your cabinet. It is your responsibility to ensure that Floridians have transparency and accountability when your administration fails to live up to its responsibilities.

After my previous letter, you chose not to address the issue at the cabinet meeting held in June. Commissioner Putnam's responses to reporters after that meeting were insufficient and do not relieve concerns that I, and many other Floridians, have. As the chief executive of our state, you owe it to all residents and visitors to ensure that these errors will not continue.

This week, we learned that the former chief of the Bureau of License Issuance sued the Florida Department of Agriculture because of its gun permit failures. The employee reportedly claims that she was told by supervisors that her responsibility was not to the people of Florida, but rather, that she, "worked for the NRA." The culture that you have fostered throughout your administration ignores the solemn duty you have to ensure that concealed carry licenses are not issued to people who are not qualified to have one. That duty is not to the NRA; it is a duty you and Commissioner Putnam owe to Floridians.

Last week, we learned that the 2017 inspector general's report falsely characterized the interviews conducted during their review. The inspector general claimed that all interviews were

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conducted under oath and recorded, but reports indicate that two key interviews were not. The inspector general is charged with reviewing the actions of agency officials and employees. The question is, who is responsible for holding the inspector general accountable? Who is responsible for holding Commissioner Putnam responsible? Who is responsible for ensuring that background checks are properly conducted to protect Floridians from people who have proven that they are not safe and responsible gun owners? The answer is you, and you have failed in each of these respects.

Two weeks ago, we learned of additional inspector general reports issued in 2012 detailing systemic problems within the Department of Licensing. The 2012 report showed that poor training and ineffective procedures produced errors in the performance of 48 different employees. While the report indicated that remedial actions were taken, those actions did not prevent the errors that continued in 2016 and 2017 when the DOL failed to notice that an employee was unable to access a database from approximately February 2016 through March 2017 resulting in at least 365 concealed carry permits being issued without completing the necessary background checks.

Because you have failed to provide any details regarding the actions you have taken in response to the report that you claimed was “disturbing” and “concerning” and that you have not provided any information regarding how you “expect everybody to be held accountable,” please respond to this letter with answers to the following questions:

- Have you discussed the concealed weapons licensing procedures directly with Commissioner Putnam?
- Have you asked Commissioner Putnam if there are any other inspector general reports that you have not been made aware of regarding licensing failures within his department?
- Were you aware of the 2012 inspector general report when you responded to reporters about the 2017 report?
- Have you asked Commissioner Putnam why he did not make you aware of the 2017 inspector general report when it was published?
- What specific “checks and balances” were implemented after the 2012 inspector general report?
- What specific changes were made to ensure employee compliance with licensing procedures after the 2017 inspector general report?
- Have you instituted new reporting requirements to ensure that the governor’s office is made aware of all inspector general reports when they are published?
- What is the formal administrative process that the department has laid out for processing applications, including the supervisory requirements to ensure that this is done properly? And will documentation detailing those processes be made public?
- What additional safeguards have been put in place to ensure compliance with Florida statute and agency guidelines going forward?

- What was the process for checking all applications that were processed during the 2016 lapse window, and how did the department initially determine that 365 permits merited review after the permit was already issued?

The people of Florida waited 368 days to learn that Commissioner Putnam's office failed to conduct these background checks and improperly issued at least 291 concealed weapons licenses to disqualified individuals over the course of more than one year. They have now waited over one month since the first IG report was revealed, have learned of a second report that detailed mismanagement years before, and you have yet to make any statements regarding how you will fix the background check system in Florida and hold Commissioner Putnam accountable. This is unacceptable.

While I look forward to your response, based on my history of correspondence with your office, I do not expect one. In lieu of a response to this letter, perhaps you can respond clearly and directly to the people of Florida.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted Deutch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ted" and last name "Deutch" clearly distinguishable.

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS